

# **The Dog Study Guide**

**The Dog by Joseph O'Neill**

(c)2015 BookRags, Inc. All rights reserved.



# Contents

<a href="#">The Dog Study Guide.....</a>	<a href="#">1</a>
<a href="#">Contents.....</a>	<a href="#">2</a>
<a href="#">Plot Summary.....</a>	<a href="#">3</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 1-2.....</a>	<a href="#">7</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 3-4.....</a>	<a href="#">9</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 5-6.....</a>	<a href="#">11</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 7-8.....</a>	<a href="#">13</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 9-10.....</a>	<a href="#">15</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 11-12.....</a>	<a href="#">17</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 13-14.....</a>	<a href="#">19</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 15-16.....</a>	<a href="#">22</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 17-18.....</a>	<a href="#">24</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 19-20.....</a>	<a href="#">27</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 21-22.....</a>	<a href="#">30</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 23-24.....</a>	<a href="#">32</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 25-26.....</a>	<a href="#">35</a>
<a href="#">Characters.....</a>	<a href="#">38</a>
<a href="#">Symbols and Symbolism.....</a>	<a href="#">42</a>
<a href="#">Settings.....</a>	<a href="#">45</a>
<a href="#">Themes and Motifs.....</a>	<a href="#">46</a>
<a href="#">Styles.....</a>	<a href="#">50</a>
<a href="#">Quotes.....</a>	<a href="#">52</a>

# Plot Summary

The Dog by Joseph O'Neill chronicles a four-year time span that the protagonist, named X, spends in Dubai.

The story begins when X and his girlfriend, Jenn, argue about having a child. They've been together for almost nine years, which, as she states, means that they are 'married' even if it isn't on paper. Since both X and Jenn have had disastrous childhoods where marriage is concerned, neither have bothered to legalize their arrangement. Both Jenn and X are high powered lawyers for a firm in Manhattan. Originally, they were going to be the high powered couple who focused on their clients and their careers, but now in her late thirties, Jenn has changed her mind. X sees it as a betrayal of their original 'contract' and plans. The couple splits, but working in the same office proves to be awkward and uncomfortable so when X runs into an old college friend, named Eddie, and is offered a job working for Eddie's family....he takes it and moves to Dubai.

It is painfully obvious after a few weeks there that the Batros Family is not only extremely wealthy, but morally bankrupt and ethically obligated to no one. X is given the dubious title of Family Officer. He determines that for an exorbitant salary, high rise office, penthouse suite apartment, company car, and other luxury items, he is to keep track of the Family's finances, oversee operations, and to arrange any sort of activity or event that the family desired.

X's introduction to the culture of the wealthy and infamous includes some lifestyle changes for him as well. He quickly locates and secures the ongoing services of a group of prostitutes who service him regularly. He also hires himself an assistant by the name of Ali. Ali is not his real name, but a generic name that all wealthy Emirates give to their servants. X says that Ali's real name is not pronounceable. Ali accepts this with ease since he is a bidoon. A bidoon is someone who is without a country. Forced out of his own country, he, and others like him drift from one Arab country to the next looking for sanctuary and work. They are considered of the lowest class in Dubai society. Lastly, X takes up the hobby of scuba diving. It is through this hobby that he learns of THE Ted Wilson.

Ted Wilson is something of a diving legend in Dubai, and has been given the nickname of Aquaman. This is due in large part to his propensity to keep to himself and dive alone, something X would never do. However, X, other than to wave at Ted Wilson, and to learn that he lives in the same apartment building as X, has never really interacted with Ted on any other basis. X states that diving clears his mind, allows him to focus only on what is in his present and not what is in his past or his future.

X's past continues to haunt him as his breakup with Jenn never seems to be far from his mind. After his first few months in Dubai he learns that Ted Wilson has gone missing. He went out diving and never came back. The local scuba club decides to mount an expedition to try and find his body, something X knows is a pointless pursuit. However,



X and his friend, Ollie, join the other divers to look for Ted. After only a short while both Ollie and X give up and go have dinner.

X has known Ollie since college days when they, and some other boys, including Eddie Batros, shared a small cottage in Dublin one summer. Ollie is Australian and is married to a nice woman named Lynn. They both seem to have assimilated into Dubai culture and Ollie owns a group of massage salons where he specializes in pedicures and foot massages. He is so good that X tells the Batros family about Ollie and in no time Ollie is massaging the feet of all of the wealthy people in Dubai.

The next day Mrs. Ted Wilson knocks on X's apartment door. She walks in, sits down, and begins to talk about where Ted could have gone. She is very distraught, but it seems to X that most of that is a show. He feels very awkward with her there and attempts to get her to leave. She becomes upset and smashes some things in the apartment before leaving. She remarks that X's apartment looks like Ted's, even down to the same books and furniture placement. When X tells Ollie about Mrs. Ted Wilson coming by the apartment Ollie tells X that there are rumors that there were actually TWO Mrs. Ted Wilsons. This rumor turns out to be true. The new rumor has it that, in order to get away from the two Mrs. Wilsons, that Ted left Dubai for a little populated island where he was living with yet another Mrs. Ted Wilson (or soon to be).

Meanwhile, at work, Sandro Batros, Eddie's brother living and running things in Dubai for the family, has saddled X with the dubious task of taking his son, Alain, on as an intern. The boy is 15 and was caught trying to steal money from the family ATM (which is located in the home). Sandro thinks that by exposing Alain to 'real work' that the boy will have an appreciation for where the money comes from. It is evident from day one that Alain doesn't want to be there any more than X wants him to be there. Later that same day he receives an invitation to come to a brunch hosted by an American acquaintance named, Brett. Brett wanted to host this brunch in honor of X who had lent him some money when Brett had lost his job. When someone who is not a Dubai citizen loses a job, all of their assets are immediately frozen, which is what had happened to Brett. X loaned him some money until he could get back on his feet. Brett had paid back almost all of it at the time of the brunch.

A month later X is summoned to the Greek Islands where he is to speak with the Family's patriarch, Georges Batros, who is well into his 90's. It is easy for X to see where the moral and ethical depravity came from when he experiences Georges's almost feral lifestyle. While they are having their conversation about the Batros Family Foundation (which X wanted to start) Georges takes a full shower in front of X while standing on the deck of his yacht. Attending Georges is a lovely young woman whose task it is to suds the old man up. X makes the best of the situation. At the end of the conversation X is interrupted by some of the crew yelling to Georges from the shore where they've caught and butchered someone's goat. Georges cheers and tells them to bring it aboard so they can roast it. The men are all covered in blood and look savage. X wonders about the poor people that the goat belonged to.



This blatant disregard for others is evident all throughout Dubai, X begins to notice. Those who are not part of the wealthy elite are considered disposable. One day, while reclined in his massage chair (called the Pasha chair) he sees something drop from one of the buildings that are under construction. He later learns that it was one of the workers committing suicide. X asks Ali about it and Ali tells him that this is commonplace, that almost every week there are dozens of workers around Dubai who take their own lives.

Alain continues to be sullen and highly resents the daily weigh-in sessions that his father is requiring. Once a day, Alain must be weighed. In order to avoid this situation, X relegates this dubious task to Ali, who suffers silently through it all. Then, one day when it is time for Alain to be weighed, Ali asks to speak with X privately. X learns that Alain has been extorting money from Ali and that Ali has been paying him because Ali is just a bidoon. Incensed he pays Ali the money that had been taken from him, and sends him on a week-long vacation, just until Alain goes back home for good. To punish the boy X has Alain write several essays. When X reads them he learns that the boy stole the money from the ATM at the request of his mother, and that he took the fall for his mother. X forwards the essays on to Sandro with the hope that Sandro will excuse the boy. He also tells Sandro, in the same email, about Alain's extortion of money from Ali. Thinking that he's taken care of his major stress factors, he leaves to go home.

X finds out that Ollie is leaving Dubai and will shortly head out to Shanghai where he will replicate the same success he's had in Dubai. This news devastates X as Ollie was the closest thing he has had to a true friend. Ollie encourages him to leave Dubai as well. Later, Sandro visits X's office and confronts him about the email. He says that Ali is to be fired because Ali was alone in the rest room with Alain, when they were weighing him. Sandro has 'fired' X many times before and then taken it back, so when he fires X this time, X doesn't pay any attention to it. This time, however, Sandro is serious and has all of his assets frozen. X calls his friend Eddie (Sandro's brother) who tells him to fly to New York that night and that they will discuss things. He assures X that things will work out okay.

When X arrives in New York, after having been gone for four years, he is disgusted, as nothing seems to have changed. It all looks the same to him, even though he expected it to have gotten 'better'. He is also worried that he might run into Jenn, though this is unfounded. He meets Eddie in a restaurant and Eddie tells him that he's done some investigation into the events in Dubai and that it would be best if X would simply stay in the U.S. To go back to Dubai would be to admit guilt and to be arrested. X is beyond upset because he's done nothing to deserve this punitive action by the Batros family. The Dubai police have been brought into the entire ordeal and the Batros Foundation is also under investigation for money laundering. Since X's name is all over both documents in the office and the Foundation, it is likely, Eddie tells him that he will be imprisoned indeterminately.

X flies back to Dubai anyway and calls Ollie. Ollie tells him to cut his losses and go home, immediately. Later on in the day the Family lawyer comes to visit X at the office and tells him, off the record, that he will be returning in a couple of hours to collect his



passport so that the work visa can be canceled. The Lawyer is suggesting that X make a run for it, back to the states. X considers his options and understands that in the past anyone opposing the Dubai government, or the wealthy elite, always came out on the wrong end of things. The injustice of it all makes him feel as if he is in the 'dog house' once again. It infuriates him to the point where he finally gains some clarity about his life and what is important to him. He decides to stay and be a thorn in everyone's side. He sits back in his Pasha chair and waits for the police to come.



# Chapters 1-2

## Summary

### Chapter 1 - PERHAPS BECAUSE OF MY GROWING SENSE....

This chapter opens with the narrator talking existentially about what a relief it was to find the hobby of scuba diving. He's living in Dubai and enjoying the scuba diving that he's been able to do; although, while he enjoys it, it has not helped him be more efficient at his job. The reader later finds out that his job is managing businesses for a wealthy friend of his that he knew back in college, Eddie Batros, whose family is apparently trillionaires and the narrator never knew it. He recalls the various instances that he and Eddie had cause to band together when they lived with a few other guys for the summer in Dublin. A chance meeting in a cloakroom in NYC many years later would land the narrator the job in Dubai.

The reader learns that the narrator is desperate to leave NYC and even considers joining the French Foreign Legion at one point...wanting a total escape from his present situation...a total break, a retreat. He's separated from his significant other, Jenn, who also works in the same office building. It makes working conditions awkward at best.

### Chapter 2 - OF COURSE DIJIBOUTI POPS

For this reason (working in the same office as Jenn), and many others, the narrator breaks down when, after a couple of weeks, Eddie's office still hasn't called with details about the job in Dubai. He learns that things are still moving forward. Shortly afterward he does receive a call from Sandro Batros, Eddie's brother. He's to meet him in London the next day for an interview. Panicked, the narrator drops everything to fly to London, then ends up missing the meeting anyway.

The reader learns that the Narrator and his long term girlfriend, Jenn, separated in large part because she changed her mind about wanting children.

## Analysis

### Chapter 1

In the opening chapter the reader sees the theme of Alienation demonstrated in that the protagonist, whose name is not given, is physically separated from his long time girlfriend, Jenn. However, it is evident in his thought processes that he sees himself as separate from almost everyone around him, as if he lacks that quintessential ability to form deep or lasting relationships with anyone. It is apparent that he has many acquaintances, but in the end, he shares nothing of himself with any of them. This is suggested as a major cause of his break-up with his girlfriend. The fact that he's willing



to make a drastic change and leave the country would underscore the idea that he's attempting to flee from something that is confronting him emotionally.

What emerges from this first chapter is that the character does not want - nor is comfortable with - anything that is emotionally challenging or meaningful. He runs from his longtime relationship because she wants to move it to a more permanent situation and to start a family. In order to avoid this, he moves out of their apartment in Manhattan, leaves the law firm where they both work, and takes an old college friend up on the offer of a job in Dubai.

## Chapter 2

This chapter is an extension of Chapter 1 in that it establishes the protagonist's character traits and delves a bit more into the reasons that he and Jenn split up. The protagonist shows the lengths to which he will go in order to remove himself from the emotional fallout and confrontations as a result of the breakup, and boards a plane at the last minute to go to London....only to miss his meeting anyway.

In a bit of foreshadowing, the man he was supposed to meet, Sandro Batros, Eddie's brother who handles the family business in Dubai, has arbitrarily determined that they will meet in London, and then arbitrarily determines (without letting the protagonist know) that he will cut the meeting short. This indicates that this time of inconsiderate behavior will be the norm when working with the Batros family. The narrator is more than willing, at this point, to be whatever they need him to be in order to leave the U.S.

## Discussion Question 1

Discuss the theme of Alienation in Chapter 1.

## Discussion Question 2

Why did the Narrator feel that he needed to leave the U.S.?

## Discussion Question 3

What was a shock to the narrator when he arrives in Dubai?

## Vocabulary

inefficiency, accumulation, bungling, momentousness, inordinate, amphibious, factual, uncorroborated, constituted, conjecture





# Chapters 3-4

## Summary

### Chapter 3 - MORE THAN EVER

The Narrator is eventually hired, quickly moves to Dubai, where he learns that he will receive the title of Family Officer for the Batros family. In essence, he is paid to worry about things that they should be worrying about, but can't be troubled by it. This includes everything from booking celebrities to sing at birthday parties, to making sure that the accounting is kept above board. The Narrator is worried that the Isle of Man accounts that are off-shore may be suspect, so in a fit of paranoia he has all of the family members sign affidavits stating that everything is legal.

### Chapter 4 - THERE ARE PLENTY OF

Living in Dubai can be a little overwhelming and so the Narrator finds a servant to help him navigate through the cultural pitfalls. This person's name is not Ali, but that is what the Narrator calls him, nonetheless. A few months later, after moving into a luxury apartment complex called The Situation, he becomes acquainted with Ted Wilson, a diving phenom living in Dubai. The locals call him Aquaman since he dives, typically, alone. The Narrator finds out that Ted lives in the same apartment building.

## Analysis

### Chapter 3

In Chapter 3 the reader sees that the his expertise as a lawyer is not so much in demand by the family Batros as is his 'trustworthiness' as Sandro tells him. They need someone to oversee the family finances and make sure that no one is 'stealing' from the family. Nonetheless, the narrator, in a fit of paranoia has all of the family members sign affidavits stating that he is acting only as their agent in all transactions that none of the transactions are for his own personal gain. This suggests to the reader that this may become a problem later on in the story.

It becomes evident from the beginning that the Batros family lives an extremely wealthy lifestyle. Their expectations from those around them are often inconceivable to the Narrator, including booking, at a week's notice, Bryan Adams to sing at Sandro's wife's birthday. The fact that Sandro gives him the wrong name at first, thereby shortening the length of time left to the Narrator to obtain the 'right' celebrity is of no concern to Sandro.

The theme of Morality is touched upon in this chapter as the reader gets a glimpse into the world of the Batros family, where people are used and abused as easily as breathing. However, the Narrator is not devoid of morality issues, himself, as he has only been in the country a few weeks when he begins routinely utilizing the services of



prostitutes, watching pornography, and indulging himself in other various pleasures that are readily available to the wealthy elite.

#### Chapter 4

The theme of Alienation is prevalent and is demonstrated in this chapter in a number of ways. First, there is the hiring of Ali, the Narrator's personal assistant. In reality, the Narrator, whom readers learn is called X by those around him, doesn't really need an assistant. He just hires one because there are tasks that he would rather not tackle, and he feels he needs someone to help him navigate through the various cultural pitfalls that he may run into. Ali becomes very helpful in this department. However, Ali is alienated by his lack of nationality. He is an illegal immigrant and as such is called a 'bidoon' and is without rights, considered an outcast in Dubai society.

X, himself, is alienated from his own name, and by natural correlation. His name, he shares, is so unpronounceable, that no one calls him by his real name....simply X. As is the X is a placeholder, or a crossing out of his identity, X is alienated from the one thing that gives each person identity....his name. In a parallel, it is obvious that he has, by extension, done this same thing to Ali (by assigning him the name instead of using Ali's real name). However, in contrast, Ali is not affected by the 'nickname' that is given to him because everyone else that matters to Ali uses his real name (which the reader never learns).

### Discussion Question 1

What makes X paranoid in his new job as Family Officer?

### Discussion Question 2

Discuss the ways that the theme of Alienation is presented in Chapter 4.

### Discussion Question 3

Why did X feel that Ali was a necessary hire and what does this tell you about X's character?

### Vocabulary

formulated, communique, candor, lunacy, industrious, emerged, persona, invalidity, condemnation, suppression, motivational



# Chapters 5-6

## Summary

### Chapter 5 IT MIGHT SEEM HYPERBOLIC

In this chapter X settles, or tries to settle, into his job, which is rather undefined. He has a lot of power, little work, and is responsible for everything and nothing at all. He is continually perplexed as to what he might be doing with his time to justify the incredibly ludicrous salary that he is commanding. He reflects on the events that brought him to Dubai and wonders if all of the expats living in Dubai are there for some of the same reasons that he is.

### Chapter 6 THE REASON I NAMED HER

A few weeks after discovering that he lives in the same building as Ted Wilson, X meets Mrs. Ted Wilson who knocks on his door, worried because Ted hadn't shown up at the airport a few days previously. X can't help her, but continues to ponder what might have happened to 'aqua-man'. She is not in a hurry to leave his apartment and X finds himself having to make small talk with her. He does learn that Ted Wilson is a Historian and teaches at one of the local universities. Mrs. Ted is ostensibly a homemaker, though she indicates that she has a 'project' that she's working on and nearly completed with. She remarks that X's apartment looks just like Ted's apartment, that they even have many of the same books.

X offers her wine and after she's had a glass she accuses him of trying to seduce her. He becomes upset with her and her suggestion and asks her to leave.

## Analysis

### Chapter 5

In this chapter, X begins to wonder if all expats who have come to Dubai are there to escape something. Though there are other expats living in Dubai, X has only met two of them. One of them is Ted Wilson, a diver whose local legend has earned him the name, Aquaman, and he's reacquainted himself with a long time friend named Ollie. The theme of injustice and corruption are evident as Ali continues to explain his lack of rights in the country, the oppression of the working community, and the reader sees how those with wealth in the country view those without money or power as inferior to them, as almost subhuman.

### Chapter 6

The theme of Loss is demonstrated in this chapter as X learns that Ted Wilson has gone missing, most likely presumed to have perished in one of his epic diving sessions. As



Ted lives in X's apartment building he isn't too astounded when Ted's wife (whom X calls Mrs. Ted Wilson) knocks on his door to find out if X knows where Ted might have gone. She invites herself in, which annoys X since he doesn't seem to like emotional contact with people. He tries to be as abrasive and evasive as possible to her, and in the end it works as she storms out of the apartment accusing him of trying to seduce her.

Of course the accusation of 'seduction' is laughable since that is the furthest thing from X's mind. In fact, he purposely calls her 'Mrs. Ted Wilson' in an effort to reinforce to himself that she is just someone's wife, and not a woman whose body he finds attractive. Mrs. Ted Wilson's comment that X's apartment is furnished and appointed similarly to Ted's is important because it establishes an answer to X's initial question about expats living in Dubai.....they are all on some level escaping from something and are similar in their proclivities.

## **Discussion Question 1**

What conclusion does X come to in regards to most of the expats living in Dubai?

## **Discussion Question 2**

Discuss the theme of Loss in Chapter 6.

## **Discussion Question 3**

Discuss the character of Ted Wilson.

## **Vocabulary**

hyperbolic, pursuant, concierge, embezzlement, verified, expenditure, reservoir, construed, complexity, opaque



# Chapters 7-8

## Summary

Chapter 7 ALL CREDIT FOR THIS GOES TO

Ollie, a friend of X's who is also living and working in Dubai, invites X to come by his Spa later on to receive 'the treatment', and the next day X takes him up on it. The Spa is at a hotel where high priced prostitutes work. It is called the Unique, though it is one of two such places named, The Unique. Here the reader learns that X is known by a false name: Mr. Pardew. He doesn't bother to correct them. While there, X learns that Mr. Ted Wilson actually has two wives. One that lives in the states and another that lives with him in Dubai.

Chapter 8 BUT WHAT WERE MY OPTIONS?

X regrets telling Ollie about his encounter with Mrs. Ted Wilson number two, and moves on to contemplate some of his other issues, namely Alain Batros, Sandros's 15-year-old son. Alain has been named X's intern as a punishment because the Batros family are concerned that at age 15, Alain doesn't know what hard work is and has no appreciation for it. As he's also been banned from touching anything electronic or remotely resembling a video game or cell phone, X gives him a book of Sudoku to play.

## Analysis

Chapter 7

The theme of Alienation and Loss are demonstrated in this chapter by the fact that X has 'lost' his name again. His predecessor was named Mr. Pardew and for some reason those at the hotel assume that he is the same person....though he apparently doesn't look anything like the real Mr. Pardew. Instead of correcting them X just goes with the name that they give him. This continues to reinforce the theme that he is 'lost' and does not feel as if he has any identity, nationality, personal attachment to anything or anyone in the human race. The only person that he seems to have any warmth for at all is Ollie, a friend of his from his college years.

Chapter 8

This is a pivotal chapter in that several incidents occur that will have high impact at the end of the novel. First, X learns that Mrs. Ted Wilson is one of two Mrs. Ted Wilson's and that Ted had been guilty of bigotry. The theme of Morality is touched upon when X learns of Ted Wilson's double life, but continues with Sandro Batros telling X that he will be taking Alain, Sandro's son, in as an intern into the office. Ironically, he wants his son to learn what 'hard work' is, but as the reader knows, X hardly does any work. He's hard



pressed to find things for Alain to do, and in the end, just gives him a puzzle book to complete during the day.

## **Discussion Question 1**

Why doesn't X correct people when they assume he is Mr. Padrew?

## **Discussion Question 2**

Discuss the pivotal incidents that occur in Chapter 8.

## **Discussion Question 3**

How is the theme of Morality demonstrated in Chapter 8?

## **Vocabulary**

intern, drudgery, assertions, intrinsically, datum, appalling, tantalization, front-piece, phenomena, obligatory, mutual



# Chapters 9-10

## Summary

### Chapter 9 THE DAY AFTER MY PEDICURE

In this chapter others have become worried about Ted's disappearance and have decided to gather all of the scuba people together to go diving to see if they can find him. X suggests that it is merely a chance for a large group of them to go diving, but he and Ollie both go. X states that he could never dive as Ted did, alone, because he states that he doesn't like to be aware of his loneliness like that. Yet, even when he is accompanied by Ollie to search for Ted, X begins to feel a crushing wave of loneliness, of meaninglessness. He states it is because everything he is looking at underwater on this day is inert. He and Ollie surface and decide to stop looking.

X states that his actual legal name was too horrid to use in public, so when someone in his former law firm gave him the designation of X, he stayed with it. His legal name, as far as he is concerned is X.

### Chapter 10 THE PASHA REMAINS MY GO-TO COMFORTER

The Pasha is a type of massage chair that X uses frequently. While enjoying a 20 minute session in 'the chair' he observes that there's always something being built in Dubai. He states that it is mankind's attempt to thumb their noses at Mother Nature for having made them suffer the desert winds and heat for centuries. He muses that the workers he sees building the skyscrapers are misused and maltreated. He feels momentarily upset by this knowledge and through a rather lengthy thought process opts to do something about it by donating some money to a local NGO whose focus is to better the working conditions for the laborers.

The session with the Pasha concludes and X reaches for a bottle of moisturizing lotion whose name is, ironically, Hope. He smears this on his face.

## Analysis

### Chapter 9

The theme of Alienation continues in this chapter as X determines to go with Ollie and a group of scuba divers to see if they can locate Ted. X states that he believes it is a waste of time but goes anyway because Ollie urges him to do so. Ollie acts as a foil to X's character, in that he does the right thing most of the time. Ollie isn't a choirboy, but he isn't a part of the moral indifference that seems to typify most of their contemporaries.



The search for Ted, so to speak, would also seem to signify something deeper. Ted is the embodiment of someone who has 'found' himself and is answerable to no one but his own inner compass. This explains why, after only a few minutes underwater, X has a panic attack and asks Ollie to go back to the boat. X is not ready to 'find' Ted, or in other words, he is not ready to come to terms with who he is and what his purpose is in life.

## Chapter 10

The theme of Corruption and Injustice is demonstrated in this chapter by X's observation about the conditions and plight of the working class in Dubai. He learns from Ali that the workers are not treated as anything more than a disposable commodity. X is appalled at first, but then, while reclining in his massage chair in his high rise apartment (above all of the dirty squalor below him) he thinks it will be more effective to send money to the organizations whose job it is to care about the plight of the workers.

There is a parallel that takes place, here, in that X is guilty of doing the very thing that the Batros family are doing to him.....treating him dismissively as if he is not a person, but merely a product to be purchased and used. It should be noted that the symbolism of the name of the sunscreen indicates that while he is using 'hope' to screen him from the harsh burn of the sun, in the end, the sun always wins. Whenever he begins to feel badly about anything, he climbs into his Pasha chair and it all goes away. This is symbolic of his lifestyle...anytime the ugliness of life confronts him, he simply can escape because his wealth allows him to do so.

## Discussion Question 1

Discuss the theme of Alienation in Chapter 9.

## Discussion Question 2

Discuss the theme of Corruption and give examples from Chapter 10.

## Discussion Question 3

What is the parallel that occurs in Chapter 10 when one compares X to the Batros family?

## Vocabulary

subsequently, erroneously, disclosed, somber, burdened, exhilarated, inexplicable, spectacle, existential, constabulary





# Chapters 11-12

## Summary

### Chapter 11 MILA I MET BACK IN MY EARLY

This chapter begins with X discussing Mila, a prostitute that he met and bedded his first week in Dubai. Originally from Russia, he finds her refreshing and he refuses to dwell on any backstory that might make him sympathetic to her plight as a hooker. He convinces himself that it is a win-win situation for both of them. He muses that with Jenn he felt as if he were always one step away from the proverbial 'doghouse' and that he was 'the dog'. He sets up a time to meet with Mila, or one of her other 'sisters' that evening at The Unique.

When X steps into the elevator to go to the Unique, he runs into Mrs. Ted Wilson number two. He is instantly uncomfortable. He has a difficult time relaxing enough to enjoy himself with his high priced call girl that evening, and instead sends off a quick email to Mrs. Ted Wilson asking to see if she would like to have a cup of coffee the next day as he may have information about Ted that she would find useful. She does not return an answer.

### Chapter 12 MRS. TED WILSON DID NOT

X doesn't get a reply to his original email to Mrs. Ted, nor does he receive one to his follow up email. He goes to the café anyway just in case she should show up. Under his arm is a copy of the magazine, *Philanthropy*. As he waits he muses about his meeting with the patriarch of the Batros family, George. He found him to be eccentric and idly wealthy, but at the end of the meeting X's idea for a Batros Family Foundation had been formed. He found George to be eccentric, indolent, ruthless, judgmental, crass, and more than a little intimidating. He is glad when the meeting is over and X can leave the yacht to go back to the desert.

## Analysis

### Chapter 11

This chapter explains the title of the book, *The Dog*. X muses about his relationship with Jenn and how all of the years that he was with her (almost nine) he always felt as if he were one step away from 'the doghouse'. He acknowledges that he mostly likely constructed 'the doghouse' himself, through his lack of emotional contact, distance, and that he played a significant role in creating a phony coupledom that contributed to the lack of true communication.

He states that he was interiorly absent and that he often misrepresented himself to her. He made the doghouse and freely inhabited it as 'the dog'. He wonders that if he was



the dog that it implies that there was a 'master'. He wonders who the master was? Jenn? He grows tired of the self-flagellation and calls his prostitute, Mila.

## Chapter 12

X is bothered that Mrs. Ted Wilson, number two, thinks that he tried to seduce her. Her sullen attitude whenever she runs into him in the apartment building bothers him more than he feels that it should. It is interesting that he carries a copy of a magazine called Philanthropy as a way to attract women, more than the fact that he is actually interested in assisting those less fortunate. This simple act demonstrates the theme of Morality, in that he presents a 'moral' image to the world, when in reality, he could care less about the unfortunate. This will be a significant fact to note as at the end of the book, he's come to terms with this hypocritical glitch in his internal code.

The theme of Morality is also indicated in the character of Georges Batros, the family patriarch. Totally devoid of consideration for his fellow man (which is evident in his impromptu shower in front of X and the killing of the goat), Georges is a caricature of those who have given in to their own corrupt nature and who fail to see the harm in anything that they've done. X sees what true corruption and immoral behavior is and begins to wonder if he shouldn't distance himself from the family.

## Discussion Question 1

Discuss the title of the book in regards to X's feelings about being a 'dog'.

## Discussion Question 2

What revelations does X come to in regards to his relationship with Jenn?

## Discussion Question 3

Discuss the character of Georges Batros.

## Vocabulary

calculatingly, cryptic, municipality, icons, desolation, remunerated, grandiose, patronizing, paradigm, courtesy



# Chapters 13-14

## Summary

### Chapter 13 SPEAKING OF WHICH

Sandros visits X in this chapter to complain that he is not happy with one of his doctors who has placed a cardio monitor to Sandros's chest. X learns that it isn't the monitor that has brought Sandros there, but rather to discuss how things are going with Alain. X says they are 'okay', but Sandros insists that now X take Alain under his wing and teach him right from wrong, mentor him, teach him something productive. X is appalled, but doesn't show this to Sandros.

When Sandros leaves, X does as well, opting to cross the plaza outside of his office. He doesn't have a destination in mind but ends up in a small art collection that is featuring trips to Antarctica. He understands the emotionally ajar faces captured in the photographs of the explorers, the 'slippery modern soul' that he sees. He understands it because he sees it daily in his office building.

### Chapter 14 IT MUST HAVE BEEN A DAY

X accepts an invitation to come to a large brunch by Brett, another ex-pat whom X helped out of a financial bind a few months earlier. To show his appreciation Brett has invited X and some of their compatriots to a nice brunch at a very upscale restaurant in downtown Dubai. They discuss the issues of service, servants, servility and compare them to U.S. domestic staff. Then the conversation shifts to the current ruler, whom they refer to as Sheikh Mo, and his impending marriage to yet another wife. His excesses are discussed.

Later on he meets another ex-pat named Samantha, who is British and currently going through a divorce. They discuss X's former separation from his long term girlfriend. X calls his relationship with Jenn, Perhapsburg, and muses on words that Jenn had hated, such as 'henceforth'. As the wine flows and the brunch continues Samantha and X draw closer. She admits that she caught her husband cheating with a younger woman, all the while claiming to have been diving with someone named, Ted. X is shocked and amazed at the small world. He tells Samantha that Ted is supposedly missing. Someone at the table says that Ted's car had been spotted in Sharjah. The group suggest that maybe Ted grew tired of Mrs. Teds 1-2 and ran to live in the outer reaches until all of the Mrs. Teds had departed and the coast was clear. Because of his association with Ted, Samantha is no longer interested in him.

## Analysis

### Chapter 13



In this chapter it is significant to note that Sandro's 'heart' is irregular. This symbolically suggests that the Batros family is flawed at its very core and that it has a disease that may spread to other parts of the Batros 'body' ....of which X is a part. X is disgusted when Sandro tells him to take Alain under his wing and teach him right from wrong....in other words, teach the boy to have some morality..which Sandro, most notably, does not have. Pushing his parental duties off on X is galling to X and he once again feels the need to escape from the Batros family.

When X views the photography display at the museum the reader begins to see that X is changing. He's beginning to understand 'why' people disconnect and, in turn, feel disconnected from. The faces of the explorers mirror his own, he decides.

## Chapter 14

The issue of Ted arises in this chapter. Just when it seems that X might be finding someone to spend some quality time with (aside from prostitutes) the issue of Ted arises and Samantha is no longer interested in him. What this seems to suggest is that on a deeper level the author is saying that people in general are a little curious and intimidated by people who have become fully self aware (like Ted).

Likewise, the discussion that ensues at Brett's brunch is telling in that it is clear that the wealthy in Dubai, especially the expat community, are all alike in that none of them are willing or able to connect deeply to others. They have all come to Dubai to escape something or someone. With this in mind, X opens up to Samantha about his failed relationship with Jenn, and Samantha returns the favor and speaks about her impending divorce. They draw closer until Samantha tells X that she caught her husband cheating on her with another woman, when he supposedly was diving with someone named Ted. X's association with Ted, even remotely, is enough to send Samantha packing.

Moral obligations and ethical considerations are shown to be arbitrary as Brett, who told X he was holding the brunch in his honor for loaning him money, sends him a bill for the food.

## Discussion Question 1

What does Sandro's heart condition mean symbolically?

## Discussion Question 2

What revelations does X have when he views the photography exhibit?

## Discussion Question 3

What is illustrated by the Brett Brunch?

## Vocabulary

accordance, liabilities, primal, admirably, nationality, venue, ambiance, theoretically, gradient, frayed



# Chapters 15-16

## Summary

### Chapter 15 I LIKE TO THINK I TRY

X is not only irritated that he didn't manage to seduce Samantha at the brunch, but is slightly irritated by the idea that Ted was not dead or in distress but may simply be enjoying some R and R with a new mistress somewhere. He also shares that early on when he was first arrived in Dubai that he used to Google his old law firm and Jenn. He likens himself to a male dog urinating on a tree in vain. He decides to do an internet search on Ted Wilson and learns that Ted was (is) a high ranking, well known professor, who had held prestigious positions in many ivy league colleges. The latest entry states that he has come to Dubai to work with a company to 'brand' Dubai to the world. Ted Wilson has also leveraged the social media platforms to create 'conspicuousness' which, according to X, afforded him a way to 'hide in plain sight'.

### Chapter 16 "BRYAN ADAMS SUCKS," HE TELLS ME.

Alain tells X that he hates Bryan Adams. He tells X that some better groups would be Slayer or Dying Humanity. As a result of his interaction and assumed guidance of Alain X states that he is now required to weigh Alain at lunch time. In order to avoid this he takes lunch at home, and enjoys some after lunch porn. Unfortunately it takes a bad turn when he views a porn film that depicts a woman being raped and beaten. He's unable to watch porn any more for fear he will see the woman again.

He quickly returns to the office and finds Alain sitting in X's chair and using X's computer. He quickly asks what Alain was doing and he says that he was doing the research that X had asked him to do on The Plague. X accepts responsibility for not shutting down his computer before he left, but the fact that the kid was on his computer bothers him. He lets Alain know that it is not okay to use his computer without his permission. X speaks to Ali and asks him to never leave Alain unattended again. Then he gives Ali the keys to the car and asks him to go down to the latest building project and find out what is actually being built.

## Analysis

### Chapter 15

In this chapter the symbol of the 'dog' arises again in that X has taken to Googling Jenn's name and his old law firm. What this indicates is that he misses Jenn, that he wonders what is going on with his old law firm, and in some way is now come to the realization that he does have some 'feelings' for his home country. X's feelings about Ted shift when he realizes, through a Google search, that Ted Wilson hadn't been in Dubai as a professor, but had taken a job as a PR professional.



Learning about another side of Ted is disconcerting for X in that he had begun to spin a narrative in his mind that he was comfortable with. With the new news this is shattered and he believes that he must find out what happened to Ted and realize what he needs to do in order to quiet his mind in this regard. He is also begrudgingly admiring of the fact that Ted had learned to 'hide' in plain sight on the internet.

## Chapter 16

This chapter lays the foundation for X's demise at the hands of the Batros family. When X leaves for lunch, leaving Ali to do the odious task of weighing Alain, he does not shut down his computer. As a result, Alain gets on there and watches porn, something that X will be accused of showing to Alain later on in the novel. Additionally, the suggestion of the musical groups that Alain thinks are more superior to Bryan Adams suggest a moral depravity that has been passed down from father to son.

It is evident that Alain has just as much (or more) disregard for his fellow human being as his father. The reader also learns, through the essays that Alain writes for X, that he admires his grandfather, Georges, and aspires to be more like him, and not like his father, Sandro. The reader will recall that Georges was the patriarch of the family whose blatant disregard for rules made the one time visit by X more than uncomfortable.

### Discussion Question 1

Discuss Alain's character.

### Discussion Question 2

How has the moral depravity of the family been passed along to Alain?

### Discussion Question 3

Discuss the symbolism of 'the dog'.

### Vocabulary

compulsive, degradation, inquisitiveness, incompatible, impression, camouflaged, distinctive, chronology, reputation, designated



# Chapters 17-18

## Summary

### Chapter 17 I'M STILL IN A SOMEWHAT

X is still upset by Alain having been on his computer but his mood lifts when he realizes that the stamper and embosser that he's ordered has arrived. He goes to town creating documents just so he can stamp and emboss them. Ali arrives from looking at the building project and reports that someone had jumped from the scaffolding. X is concerned, but Ali states that it happens all of the time, at least once or twice a week. Then Ali grows very quiet and tells X that there is a problem with the car. He tells X that he needs to show him. They leave the office building but when they reach the car, X learns that it was just a ruse to get him out of earshot of the boy. He tells X that Alain has been shaking him down for money and that Ali has been giving it to him because Ali is a bidoon and Alain is the son of a very wealthy citizen. X is angered and tells Ali not to be worried about it. He reimburses Ali for the trouble the boy has caused and sends him home. X drives Alain home but the two don't speak. X needs to think about how he will approach the situation.

### Chapter 18 THIS ISN'T TO SAY THAT

After dropping Alain off at his home (compound) X drives back to his apartment building. Along the way he thinks about families and how the perception between reality and fantasy differ drastically and are the same in Dubai as in other parts of the world. He thinks about a time that he, Ollie, and Ollie's wife, Lynn, went to the ice cream place near the mall. A large group of burqa wearing women surged past them, cutting in line in front of them, then left in as big a rush as they entered. At the time Lynn told X that it was okay and that the women weren't as much frightening as they were mothers trying to get ice cream for their children before all hell broke loose.

X also expounds on the fact that Ollie, when left to his own devices, becomes a prankster, as evidenced by the one time X came by for a pedicure and wound up with pink toenails. Still, another time, just in the recent past, he recalls that Ollie, when Lynn was out of the country, arranged for he and X to meet up at the Budda-Bar. When he arrived, Ollie had secured him a 'date'...a very blond date. The woman that Ollie set him up with that night had been none other than Mrs. Ted Wilson number two.

## Analysis

### Chapter 17

In this chapter the reader learns that Alain is a 'chip off the old block' when it comes to exploiting and abusing those who are less fortunate, and those they see as subordinate to them. When Ali confesses to X what is going on, he is embarrassed to have to





mention it, as if the occurrence is his fault. X, to his credit, is angry and concerned and starts to wonder how to handle the situation. Since he only has one more week with Alain as his intern, he determines that he will just remove the temptation from Alain. What is notable, here, is that X cares at all. For so many chapters he has bought into the Batros and expat conception of how people are treated in Dubai that one is shocked when he seems to be taking a stand for the oppressed.

Instead of having Ali drive Alain home, X drives Alain home, himself. Nothing is said as Alain sits in the back, as if he were being chauffeured. X notes when he drops off Alain that Alain doesn't even jump out of SUV but waits for some bodyguards to open the door and escort him in. X wonders that the boy treats people the way that he does...it's all he's ever known. This entire chapter, from Ali's confession to Alain's quiet disdain demonstrate the themes of Alienation and Morality, in that there is such a line of demarcation among the classes in Dubai that abuses occur and are not given any thought to. The definition of morality in Dubai is different than it is in the U.S. and as such, X's reaction is typically American, and thus the theme of Nationality is demonstrated, as well.

## Chapter 18

The theme of Nationality is also evident in this chapter, as X reflects on the time that he went to the Ice Cream Parlor with Ollie and his wife. Several frantic burqua wearing women come into the parlor, cut line, purchase their ice creams and run out. X is upset that they've been treated like this, but Ollie's wife, Lynn says that it's just easier if you see them without all of the clothes, just seeing them as moms. X comes to the determination that while he lived in the U.S. he didn't consider himself much of an American. However, leaving the country and landing in a new one, experiencing the perspectives and practices of a culture far removed from his own have made him come to appreciate the country he left. In an expansion of this theme, in an earlier chapter he has realized that he treated Jenn poorly and doesn't blame her for leaving him. In like manner, he understands a new appreciation for the U.S. and for Jenn.

## Discussion Question 1

How is the theme of Nationality demonstrated in both Chapters 17-18?

## Discussion Question 2

Discuss the changes that have occurred in X's attitude toward the U.S. and Jenn.

## Discussion Question 3

What actions by Alain show that he is very much a product of his environment?

## Vocabulary

intrinsically, domain, comprising, trudges, silhouette, concise, materialized, aristocratic, vagrant, ecstatic, prestige, falsity



# Chapters 19-20

## Summary

### Chapter 19 WHAT HAPPENED NEXT IS

Meeting Mrs. Ted Wilson number two in the bar gets even more interesting when Mrs. Ted doesn't recognize X. Since this had occurred after their meeting in X's apartment, and the awkward elevator ride a few days later, he can't see how she can fail to recognize him. X figures out that she doesn't recognize him because she's so focused on Ollie and his sympathetic murmurings. Apparently she had found out about the other Mrs. Ted and is distraught about it. X remembers that there is a sort of 'lostness' that occurs when one finds oneself doing things alone that previously had been done with a significant other.

As Ollie continues to talk to her and she responds, X realizes that he'd rather be anywhere else but there. He contemplates his involvement in the entire situation, casually wonders if either he or Ollie will be bedding her, wonders if her breasts are real, then decides that the best thing can do is to just leave. He pretends that he needs to take a call and excuses himself. On the way home he texts Ollie to tell him that he just can't sit through a scene like that and to make apologies for him. Later, Ollie calls him to find out what is up and X tells him that it made him feel uncomfortable. It is clear that Ollie doesn't get it, but they are friends and a few weeks later they have lunch as if nothing ever happened.

X reminisces about some of his past interactions with Jenn, in particular when he'd been sent to a fertility doctor and he'd had to leave a sample. He had performance anxiety and had to take the 'receptacle' home with him for completion. Later he told Jenn that he was done and won't be going back to the fertility clinic. Jenn went crazy and accused him of setting her up and that he owed her a baby. She berated him, told him to 'do his duty' and then, when he'd barricaded himself in the bathroom, had had to sit through a montage of all of his shortcomings and how her childlessness was his fault. He relives the horrible breakup and how, the next day after going to work, he immediately went back to the apartment, packed his bags and left.

### Chapter 20 EASIER SAID THAN DONE

X is faced with a dilemma in regards to Ali and Alain. Since Alain's internship is ostensibly over in one more week, X opts to give Ali the week off at full pay. This removes the temptation to extort anything from Ali. And, then, all things willing, Alain will go back to doing whatever he was doing before he became X's problem, and life can proceed at a nicer pace. He muses that there is a distinct difference between being and doing, especially where the office is concerned.



He goes to lunch with Ollie who fills him in on the details pertaining to the encounter with Mrs. Ted Wilson number two. He tells X that Mrs. Ted number two did have it confirmed that Ted was, indeed, a bigamist, and that he had a child by his other wife. Mrs. Ted 2 decided to fly back to Chicago and file for a divorce. X tells Ollie that he can't figure out how Ted had the time to have two families and lead a double life considering that he was posting non-stop on social media, held a high powered career with a PR agency, and then engaged in diving on a routine basis.

## Analysis

### Chapter 19

One has to think that the reason that Mrs. Ted Wilson number two doesn't recognize X is that he has changed, not only in his demeanor, but in the way that he looks. Many months have passed and he's lived in Dubai without seeing her for a while. The theme of Loss is demonstrated in this chapter not only in the very real fact that Mrs. Ted Wilson has 'lost' her husband, and her respect for her husband, but that X reflects upon the initial feelings of loss when a person (newly separated or widowed) does something that previously had been done with the significant other. He says that there is an intense feeling of loss, of things not being 'right'. He understands what he's lost in the way that he treated Jenn and in his own selfish perspectives. He recalls the major fight that he and Jenn had after X had gone to the fertility clinic and had become embarrassed when he couldn't produce a 'sample'.

This chapter reflects on the 'old' X and how he'd thought about the situation. The 'new' X sees now that he breached an unspoken contract between them and that he should have, much earlier on in the game, reminded Jenn that he wasn't interested in ever having children. He supposes that he kept quiet about his feelings because it was simply easier to go along with the ruse, but in the end, he realizes that his silence only created a larger and ever widening gulf that eventually the relationship fell in to.

That he thinks of that instance with Jenn shortly after he excuses himself from the meeting with Ollie and Mrs. Ted Wilson is significant. He recognizes that he wasn't able to 'be there' for Jenn, and in many ways, he cannot bring himself to 'be there' for Mrs. Ted Wilson. He detests the fact that he doesn't seem to have it in him to sympathize with his fellow man and he decides that when the situation next presents itself he will make a change in his outlook. These prophetic words will come back to haunt him and prompt him to make the large decision that he makes at the end of the book.

### Chapter 20

X's reflection on the act of 'being' as compared to 'doing' is significant in this chapter because X has made a significant shift in his thinking. He realizes that one can simply exist (being) and in essence take up space, making little to no ripple on the waters of mankind. OR, one could be 'doing' and in that instance, make a difference some how. He hopes that giving Ali time off will allow things to return to normal for everyone,



though somehow deep inside he knows that they most likely won't. He speaks to Ollie about the Mrs. Ted incident and Ollie confirms that Mrs. Ted Wilson number one had become pregnant and in Dubai that is an instant death sentence if one isn't married.....so to save the woman, he'd married her. Thus, two Mrs. Ted Wilsons. This new information places Ted back into a good place in X's mind, which is interesting because only a few years prior to this he would not have agreed with his current observations. It would seem that X is beginning to find his lost humanity.

X surfs the web and finds Ted's old Facebook page, which hasn't been updated in a long while. However, there are posts on there from the Mrs. Wilsons, telling Ted to 'go to hell' and other such flaming comments. X believes he knows why Ted had taken to diving. When diving one leaves the world for a while and is wrapped in a watery blanket of indifference, where everything is or is not. There are no variations on that theme underwater and it is something that he feels Ted knew very well.

## **Discussion Question 1**

Discuss the theme of Loss in Chapter 19.

## **Discussion Question 2**

What is the difference between 'being' and 'doing' according to X. Is he correct?

## **Discussion Question 3**

In light of the new information on Ted, how has X's views about him changed?

## **Vocabulary**

impairment, humiliation, vagabondage, inanity, intercontinental, inescapably, calamitous, bizarre, domination, misconceptions, coincided



# Chapters 21-22

## Summary

### Chapter 21 NOT SO FAST

Facing boredom, X decides to surf the internet and finds himself on Ted Wilson's Facebook page, again. Though Ted hasn't posted anything since his 'disappearance' the former Mrs. Ted 2 continues to post her feelings on his whole lifestyle choice. Soon, as X watches, more and more people begin posting harsh comments about Ted. He wonders if he should post something to the contrary, but eventually decides that it would resolve nothing. X briefly comes to terms with the idea that he 'should' have shared with Jenn that he was not ever going to want children at an earlier date so as to have allowed her to move on with her life before her biological time clock was close to stopping. He duly acknowledges his own shortcoming in this, then takes a sleeping pill and goes to bed.

### Chapter 22 MY MORNING STARTS

Back at the office, with Ali on forced vacation, the trashcans need to be emptied. X thinks that this would be a perfect thing for the kid to take care of. Alain tells him that he will not take out the garbage. X asks why and Alain tells him to 'fuck off'. Angry, X takes the garbage out and hears Alain snickering behind the door. This enrages X. When he returns he goes into his inner office, closes the door and surfs over to the Dubai police website. He finds that Sandro has many unpaid tickets...which he takes care of.

He reads Alain's essay and learns that Alain initially got in trouble because he attempted to take money out of the family's own ATM which is in their home. He confesses in the essay that he did it because his mother asked him to. She had been 'cut off' from the ATM weeks earlier because of her spending issues. X forwards the essay on to Sandro's telling him to read the essays and sharing with him the pressure that Alain has been putting on Ali to give him money. Feeling better about things, he opts to take Alain to a Dubai history museum. They end up having fun and sort of bonding.

## Analysis

### Chapter 21

In this chapter the reader sees X considering intervening, but talking himself out of it. He wants to become involved and 'do' something that will matter. He understands that if Ted is dead, then championing him on Facebook isn't going to matter. And if Ted is alive and living on an island with a happy mistress, then he's not accessing his Facebook anyway and does not care. X, once again, returns to his memories of how he treated Jenn and other people over the last four years and realizes that he was a class A shmuck. He wonders what people would post on his Facebook if he were to die that very



day. With the sobering thought that no one would bother to post at all, he takes a sleeping pill and goes to bed.

## Chapter 22

In this chapter the reader sees X continuing to clean up the Batros family messes. He's still stuck with Alain and to make matters worse, when he asks Alain to empty the trashcans, to take some responsibility, Alain refuses. When X becomes angry, Alain snickers behind his back, because he knows that in the end he out ranks even X. This sense of powerlessness motivates X to assign an essay to Alain about various topics. When he gets the essay back, what he reads demonstrates the theme of Morality as X reads that Alain stole the money from the family ATM (they have one in their house) for his mother, whose allowance had been cut back. Thinking that Sandro would want to know about this, he forwards the essay to Sandro. It is clear to see that the lack of morality and common decency that would be extended in his own home country, is not extended in the same way in Dubai.

To make matters worse, in his email X tells Sandro about Alain extorting money from Ali, mentioning that it is unacceptable. Feeling as if he has finally made a difference he concludes that maybe Alain just needs someone to be his friend, someone to become a mentor to him. So, he takes Alain on a 'field trip' to an old Dubai museum where the boy seems to really enjoy himself. X's feelings about Alain ease up and he thinks that maybe he can make a difference in Alain's life, maybe change him for the better.

## Discussion Question 1

What events show that X is changing in his thought processes toward people?

## Discussion Question 2

Why doesn't X post anything on Ted's Facebook?

## Discussion Question 3

What sobering realization does X have in Chapter 21?

## Vocabulary

egocentricity, superstition, anthropocentric, adjudicatory, audibly, consternating, resolved, ratty, futile, diminish, retained, implications



# Chapters 23-24

## Summary

### Chapter 23 NOTWITHSTANDING THE OCCASIONAL COMMENT

In this chapter X states that Ted Wilson's demise (real or imagined) has faded from the expat radar and, therefore, its gossip circles. Still, X wonders whether Ted is alive or dead. His curiosity shifts to Mrs. Ted number two and he begins to fantasize about her sexually. This is disrupted when he receives a phone call from an acquaintance of his from New York, who is visiting Dubai. They meet in an English pub and X thinks that he sees Mrs. Ted number one singing in the lounge. They go in and listen. X makes a pass at her and the piano player tells him that she is his wife. X backs away and his friend from New York leaves to go back to his own hotel. Later, when X tells Ollie about it, he tells X that it wasn't Ted Wilson's other wife, most likely. He also tells X that he (Ollie) may be leaving to go to Shanghai for business reasons. He states that if he does that he will not return to Dubai. X acts as if he is happy for Ollie, but he is not. He drowns his sadness in Mila, who offers to bring along a friend.

### Chapter 24 THE THREESOME

Just as X is headed out to meet up with Mila, the doorman rings up to tell him that Ali is in the lobby. X goes down to see what Ali wants. Ali says that with his time off he has been investigating The building Project and he has learned that it is a mock up that the real building will be built somewhere else. X thanks him and leaves for the evening.

His escort for the evening is another Russian girl, but X is unable to perform since she asks for money up front (which is unusual). He finds out that Mila has been extorting the escorts all of these months, taking 60% of the money. His usual arrangement of him paying Mila discreetly and then Mila paying the girls is apparently over. He pays the girl, but then leaves without doing anything. He goes home, jumps on the Pasha chair but even that doesn't give him any relaxation.

The next morning Sandro storms into the office demanding that Ali be fired. X says that if Ali goes that he will quit. Sandro calls his bluff and asks for the keys to the company car. X starts packing his items into a box in front of Sandro. Sandro leaves and X goes to his apartment where he emails Eddie Batros. Eddie tells X to fly to New York and that he is, in fact, definitely NOT fired. X flies to New York.

## Analysis

### Chapter 23

When X allows himself to fantasize about Mrs. Ted Wilson number two it is evident that he doesn't view her as anyone's wife any longer. A chance meeting takes him to a





lounge to meet up with an old college friend. Who should be singing in the lounge, but a woman fitting the description of Mrs. Ted Wilson number one. Though he doesn't have any proof he approaches the singer and his interaction with her and her supposed 'husband' demonstrates the theme of Nationality again. X feels that what he's doing is harmless, but in Dubai what he has done could have serious consequences. He realizes that for all of the years he's been there he doesn't truly know the 'real' Dubai.

Of note is the fact that Ollie tells X that he's leaving Dubai. As X's foil it is understandable that Ollie would leave. Dubai is becoming more hostile to outsiders, and with X's fall from grace with the Batros family, Ollie (whose clients mostly come from the Batros association) will most likely suffer, too. Before this can happen, Ollie is going to take up stakes and move to Shanghai where he can start over again. He is very calm about it and his wife is more than happy to come along with him. X can't fathom why Ollie would want to leave, which indicates that X still doesn't get how things are done in Dubai.

## Chapter 24

X's world begins to unravel when the hooker that Mila has set him up with demands money in advance. This has never been the arrangement and when he queries the girl he learns that all of this time Mila has been underpaying the girls. In fact, Mila is exploiting them just as badly as everyone else exploits the working calls in Dubai. This makes X feel as if he's enabled this type of behavior and he's unable to feel sexual any longer. Where just a few months ago he might have thrown his feelings to the wind and had sex with the prostitute, this new X can't do that. In fact, he doesn't stay, but still goes ahead and pays the girl her wages.

The next thread to come undone in his life's tapestry is that Sandro visits the office. He basically accuses Ali of committing sexually inappropriate acts with Alain when he weighed him. X knows that this is untrue, but Sandro is adamant that Ali be fired. X says that he will quit if Ali is fired. Sandro, who routinely fired and rehired X, doesn't rehire X back. In fact, he demands the keys to the company SUV. He lets X stay fired. X calls Eddie Batros who tells him to fly to New York to meet with him. X takes the next flight out.

## Discussion Question 1

What becomes evident to X in Chapter 23?

## Discussion Question 2

What does X's ignorance about Dubai's customs and people cause to happen to both Ali and himself?



## Discussion Question 3

What action does X take in Chapter 24 that he never would have done before?

## Vocabulary

bilateral, sensual, isolating, interpersonal, diligent, exhilarating, elliptical, incumbent, transact, post-traumatic, lunar



# Chapters 25-26

## Summary

### Chapter 25 - FROM THE BELT PARKWAY

X shares that it has been four years since he's been back to New York and he's upset that things look the same. He had hoped that things would have been 'better'. On the train he catches a pregnant girl who almost falls when the train veers off. She screams at him to get his hands off of her. Her boyfriend comes over and there is a confrontation that ends with X getting off of the train still hearing insults being hurled at him. He confesses that he has the "Jenn Jitters" and though he has no plans to see her he is worried that somehow he might run in to her.

He does an internet search the day before he leaves, not on Jenn, but on himself and is alarmed to learn that some of the suggested search terms (which have been utilized by other searchers presumably) are less than flattering. He contacts a tort attorney who basically tells him that since it is an auto suggestion function of Google that there is no way to track down the people responsible.

He has dinner with Eddie who promptly orders him a drink to 'settle his nerves'. X tries to talk about Sandros and Eddie waves it off as nothing. He says that there is a more important matter to be addressed. The Dubai authorities are about to launch a full financial investigation of the Batros Foundation for laundering money. Eddie tells him that as things stand they are going to go after X because his name is all over the transactions. X tells him that he has all of the disclaimers stating that he is only acting on behalf of the family. Eddie tells him that this won't matter..they are set to go after X. Eddie tells him that he cannot now or ever go back to Dubai. To make sure that X understands this, he fires him, again.

### Chapter 26 - IT'S NOT JUST BECAUSE

X returns to Dubai anyway after spending an entire drunken evening on the town. He realizes that this was, singularly, the worse possible move ever. All of his accounts are frozen, he has no car, and no job. X shows up at the investigator's offices who promptly turn him away. The Batros family have made it clear that X has been dismissed and as such they lack the jurisdiction to interview him. X offers to speak with them anyway and they decline.

X calls Ollie to complain. They meet for drinks and Ollie tells him to leave Dubai. Ollie also says that he's finalized plans and will be leaving shortly for Shanghai. The family lawyer comes to X's apartment in Dubai so that X can sign some paperwork. Once the lawyer has arrived he also advises X to leave Dubai. He tells them that the police are interested in him, and are thinking of charging him with gross misconduct with Alain. It is against the law to privately tutor a child and as it turns out Alain had been 'shown' porn



on the office computers. Additionally, they are suggesting that Ali did inappropriate things with Alain when he weighed him. The lawyer also accuses him of using an alias around town: Godfrey Pardew. His suggestion is that X leave, quickly. He also tells X that his visit will not be the last visit that he will most likely receive that day. The lawyer tells X that he will return in a few hours for his passport because he will need to cancel the work visa. His inference is that X take that time to pack and leave the country.

Ali returns his call and X takes it quickly. He learns that Ali is also leaving the country and has been accepted for citizenship in Comoros. Then, X makes a decision. He drops his bags, moves to the Pasha chair and climbs onto it. He looks out over the vista that he can see from his window. He recalls another case that was similar to this, only in the U.S., and he admires the man for fighting against the corrupt system that placed him in jail. X admires him because in his incarceration there is clarity; he has surfaced from illusion and knows where he stands with friends and enemies alike. And, so, he settles down to wait for the authorities to knock on his door.

## Analysis

### Chapter 25

X's return to New York is a let down for him. He is upset that nothing has changed, but what is interesting to note is that HE'S the one that's changed. He wants things to have gotten 'better' in his own country. He engages in a moral act of saving a pregnant woman from falling on the train, and is yelled at for his efforts. Despite his best efforts to separate himself from the Batros financial dealings, Eddie, later that evening at the meeting, tells him that the administration in Dubai are investigating the Batros Family Foundation, claiming that it is little more than a money laundering set up. X is adamant that he is not at fault and should not be implicated. Eddie is sympathetic, but he knows how things happen in Dubai. He urges X to cut his loses and stay in New York. Eddie tells him that if it makes him feel better then Eddie will fire him, again.

The theme of Corruption and Injustice is demonstrated in this chapter as the reader sees how X is being railroaded and accused of activities that he never engaged in. So many instances have occurred that make him look very guilty. Eddie practically admits to X's innocence and tells his friend that if he goes back to Dubai that more than likely he will go to jail, even though he is innocent. This shows that the wealthy are insulated from the punitive measures that others have to follow. In fact, X sees how very far down the food chain he truly was.

### Chapter 26

His decision to go back to Dubai should not shock the reader. At this point in the novel X has become someone who wants to make a difference. He thinks that if he stays and fights the system that, because he is an American, he can draw attention to the corruption that occurs there. He can serve as a cautionary tale if nothing more. What appalls him is that they are going to charge him, and not Ali, with the sexual misconduct



with Alain since it is X's office computer that has the porn sites in the history. Additionally, he's guilty of breaking the law that prohibits underaged children from being privately tutored. It is irrelevant that Sandro insisted that X tutor his child....this is immaterial, and in all likelihood, Sandro knew about this rule and simply did not care what happened to X. The corruption is complete in that X realizes that he was just as disposable as the furniture.

X talks to Ollie who also tells him to flee the country. X has several chances to leave, but finds that he can't do it. To run is to return to the same unfeeling, uninvolved person that he was. He knows, and hopes, that if he stays and is arrested that he can continue to fight the system from inside of it. In a last and memorable scene, X climbs into the Pasha chair for one last massage while he waits for the police to come and arrest him. Instead of feeling alienated he feels connected to a larger cause, something bigger than himself. He sees the wide open skies, remember what it feels like to dive in the ocean, and embraces what will come.

## Discussion Question 1

Discuss the themes of Corruption and Injustice in Chapter 25.

## Discussion Question 2

What is the Batros family accusing X of?

## Discussion Question 3

Why doesn't X leave when he has the chance to?

## Vocabulary

terminal, apparel, sheen, intensifies, tainted, sponsored, illogical, tributary, rendezvous, jurisdiction, inconsistent



# Characters

## Narrator/X

The story's protagonist is an New York attorney who, just after 2011, finds himself wanting to distance himself from not only his current job, but also his former girlfriend and his country. When a job opening shows up in Dubai, he accepts it without question. In not too short an order he realizes that he should have asked questions, and lots of them.

X is an observer of human nature, which, as an attorney has stood him in good stead. However, his inability to connect on a 'real' level with any other human being, especially his ex-girlfriend, Jenn, lies at the core of his dysfunction. In fact, the reader goes through the entire novel only learning bits and pieces about X, never knowing what his real name is, learning that he was brought up by a Swiss mother who spoke French to him, that he had some friends that he spent a summer with in Dublin during his college years, and that as a general rule he uses, though doesn't abuse, people as a general rule.

To say that X is a likable protagonist is to give too much credence to the man, and yet, at the end of the missive the reader feels sorry for X for getting himself into such a predicament and in some respects are able to scrape up enough sympathy at the end to commend him for his decision to take a moral stand against a Goliath of an institution like the Batros family and the Dubai government. The reader also knows, in all likelihood, that he will fail at the attempt, much as the protagonists knows, but that isn't the point. The point is that the character has finally found some moral purchase upon which he can stand, and in doing so gains the clarity that he has been searching for for so many years.

## Ollie Christakos

Ollie Christakos, who is from Cootamundra, Australia, originally met X when they were college buddies and stayed with a larger group of friends in Dublin for the summer. They both end up in Dubai, though in different years, initially. They find one another and reunite. It is Ollie who has arrived before X and introduces him around to the various wealthy elite. He shows him the best places to dine, the best hookers to entertain, and basically introduces him to the culture that is Dubai.

Ollie serves many functions in the novel, mainly as that of a foil for X. Unlike X, Ollie is genuine and outgoing, as opposed to snide and condescending. Ollie is happily married, and has been, for many years. X cannot manage to keep a girlfriend, and makes it a point not to get close or know anything about the prostitutes he routinely beds.



Ollie is also a sounding board for X in that other than Ollie there is no one else in Dubai that X trusts. Through his conversations with Ollie, the reader learns about X's ill fated romance with Jenn, his decision to leave NY, the trouble with Mrs. Ted Wilson, the mystery surrounding Ted's disappearance, and the reader sees some of the deep seeded fears that X shares with no one but Ollie. Ollie is trustworthy and steady, and X is none of the above.

## **Ted Wilson**

Ted Wilson only shows up sporadically throughout the novel, sometimes alive, sometimes dead, sometimes spotted in remote places. Ted is an enigma, whose claim to fame is that he is an extraordinary diver in Dubai. He dives alone, which the locals call crazy. They call him Aqua-man, or the Man from Atlantis. Whenever he is spotted by someone else who is diving, it is such a great thrill that an immediate email is sent out to the diving community and a Ted spotting site is created. Ted is in his forties, bald, American, and was formerly a History professor at various ivy league colleges. He took a job as a PR guy for a large PR firm in Dubai.

When he goes diving and does not return, it is discovered that he had at least two wives, who knew nothing about one another.

## **Eddie Batros**

Eddie is part Lebanese and is worth millions of dollars. Eddie and X once shared a house in Dublin one summer with a bunch of others when they were college age. They both spoke French and talked behind other's backs. Eddie still has the aviator glasses that he had back then. A professor had told him he had to remove them in class and Eddie was upset about it because they were prescription based and without them he couldn't see. He is in Dubai on business and has run into X. They reminisce about the good old days and he catches X up on what all of their friends are up to. He offers X the job that he takes in Dubai to keep an eye on the 'family interests'.

## **Sandro Batros**

Sandro Batros is Eddie's older brother. Apparently he is the black sheep of the family and he's been assigned to oversee the efforts in Dubai where he can't mess anything up (according to Eddie). It is Sandro that draws up the paperwork involving X's employment and it is Sandro that X meets with initially to firm up the offer and the job. X reports directly to Sandro.

Sandro has a son, Alain, whom he sends to X as an intern. It is this position that he places X in that ultimately results in an accusation of child molestation and misappropriation of funds by X.



## Jenn

Jenn is X's former girlfriend. They had been together for nine years when she decided that she wanted to have a baby. This shocks and astounds X since they had never discussed wanting children. He refuses to agree to having a child and she throws him out. The fact that they both work in the same law office makes going to work difficult.

it should be noted that the combination of both of their names sounds phonetically like GEN-X, which is the moniker for those born during the years that both Jenn and X would have been born. This may mean that the author is suggesting that as a credit to their generation, they are both devoid of certain characteristics that would have made them happy.

## Ali

Ali is the bidoon that X hires as a personal assistant. Ali is not Ali's real name, but his real name is not pronounceable by X and so he just calls him, Ali. Ali doesn't seem to mind. As a bidoon (a man without a country) Ali is just thankful to have a job. However, later on in the novel, Ali confesses to X that Alain has been extorting him for money, which Ali has been giving him. Since Ali is of the lowest caste and Alain is a wealthy man's son, Ali felt that he had no option but to give the boy the money. At the end of the novel, Ali has been granted citizenship in another country and is leaving Dubai ahead of the Federal Police who are coming after both X and Ali.

## Mila

Mila is a girl that X met back in the early days in Dubai. She is a prostitute from Minsk and loves to talk about Russia, as well as provide her services. X likes being with her because she actually seems to like having him be in a room with her, which is something that his ex-girlfriend never did.

## Muhammad

Muhammad is a 'fixer' for the Batros family. If there is anything that has gone 'awry' Muhammad is called and he makes the problems 'go away' in one fashion or another. He also investigates for the family and keeps tabs on various shadier aspects of the Family's operations.

## Alain Batros

Alain Batros is Sandro's fifteen-year-old son. Alain is sent to work as an intern for X, who doesn't want him there any more than the boy wants to be there. However, he is to intern with X for several months. Part of this punishment is that he is to be weighed





each day at lunchtime. Since X is disdainful of this practice he delegates this job to Ali, which is a cultural no-no since he is a bidoon. X doesn't understand this until it is too late.

Alain is shown to be a sullen boy, who is nonetheless fairly bright. Several times X catches him on X's personal computer in the office and has to tell him sternly not to use his computer. Later, it is discovered that Alain had been watching porn, which makes it look as if X has been watching porn. It is just another strike against him thanks to Alain.

When it comes to light that Alain has been extorting money from X's poor assistant, X is livid. He gives his assistant the rest of the week off, then finally contacts Sandro to tell him what has been going on. In the interim time X has learned that Alain only took money from his family because his mother asked him to. He doesn't like his father at all, preferring his grandfather, Georges, whom he spends all of his vacations with in Greece or Beirut.

## **Georges Batros**

The family patriarch, at nearly 90 years old, Georges Batros is the poster boy for depravity and moral corruption. He has blatant disregard for anyone else's feelings, property, or existence. What Georges wants, Georges takes in one way or another. He delights in making others feel uncomfortable in his presence and always takes every opportunity to prove that he is still the 'big man' in the room.

## **Samantha**

Samantha is a woman that attended the brunch hosted by Brett. When she meets X she likes him, but then finds out that he used to dive with Ted (or so she assumes) and she immediately starts to dislike him because her soon to be ex-husband claimed to be diving with Ted, but really was sleeping with a mistress.

## **Brett**

Brett is an American whose company downsized him, and according to local tradition, had all of his sources of income (including bank accounts) frozen. X loans Brett 50k AED until he could get back on his feet. Brett pays back all but 10k of it, but then sends a bill to X asking that he pay for his own 'appreciation' brunch that Brett was throwing in his honor. Oddly enough, Brett doesn't seem to remember X when X arrives at the brunch.



# Symbols and Symbolism

## Astrominium

This was supposed to be the tallest apartment building complex in Dubai and much hype surrounded its anticipated construction. However, as the narrator writes, it was literally nothing more than the largest hole in the ground in Dubai because funding fell short. This building (or lack thereof) is indicative of the excesses and overreaching that occur among people and their dreams/ambitions.

## The Pasha Chair

The Pasha Chair is a top-of-the-line massage chair. X routinely sits in the pasha chair at his apartment and looks out of his large windows at the skyscrapers that are being built. This thrill is taken from him when he witnesses one of the workers committing suicide from one of the taller buildings. Still, he considers the Pasha one of his greatest luxuries, and it is what he sits back down on while he's waiting for the police to come and arrest him.

## Diving

X takes a liking to scuba diving when he arrives in Dubai. It helps him make necessary connections and he states that when he is under the water, at least for a short span of time, he can leave his problems topside. He feels as if diving and the ocean are his only true retreat.

## A Baby

This is the final straw that breaks X and his girlfriend up. They had been together for nine years and she feels that her biological clock is winding down and that it behooves her to have a child with X. X refuses and they break up. The 'baby' embodies all of those unspoken things that both he and Jenn never discussed about their lives together.

## The Greek Goat

When X goes to visit Georges Batros on his yacht in Greece, he witnesses some of Georges's crew members catching and slaughtering a goat from one of the villager's farms. The men act feral and almost smear the blood all over them. Georges is thrilled by their exploits and tells them to bring the goat back to the boat for roasting. The total disregard for anyone's property or the impropriety of what he and his crew are doing escapes Georges, and the goat becomes a symbol of his debauchery.



## Bidoons

X learns of bidoons, who are people living in Dubai that have no official state. In other words, they are illegals that have come into the country for one reason or another. They are considered the lowest of the low and have no rights.

## A Dog

Many times the main character, X, compares himself to a 'dog'...and hence the title of the book. From references to the dog-eat-dog world in Dubai, to X feeling as if he were the proverbial 'dog' in his relationship with Jenn. He states that saying that he was in the 'doghouse' with Jenn, as he'd often stated, implied that if there was a dog, then there was a master. This revelation makes him even more depressed. He reminisces about a pit bull named Matilda, who was the only dog he'd ever met, and reflects that of all the creatures on the planet, she is the only one that accepted him for who he was...without care or concern.

Later, Jenn tells X that she doesn't want a dog (when X suggests that they get one as a surrogate for a baby). Jenn says that she's not a 'dog' person. This is very telling since X IS a dog person and identifies with dogs. He mentions that in some countries, they eat dogs.

## Slayer/Dying Humanity

These are the two music groups that Alain tells X he should be listening to instead of Bryan Adams. The irony of both of these bands is that their lyrics are about death and destruction...which is exactly what Alain brings to X.

## “Hospitality of the Desert”

This is the title of the short advertisement that Ted Wilson made in an attempt to lure more tourists into the country. X mentions it because the film is certainly dated and maudlin in its nature.

## The Jenn Rule

One shall not be Googled by those who do not wish to be Googled, is the basic Jenn Rule. X develops this Jenn rule after spending at least a year or more Googling Jenn after their breakup. This Jenn Rule also comes back to haunt X when it is discovered that 'someone' had been Googling him with some 'not so flattering' search terms.



## **The Autobiography**

When X starts to work for the Batros family he is given a black Range Rover, which he calls The Autobiography. One can infer that he calls the Range Rover this because it is a testament to his own life....on lease from the Batros family.

## **Hope Sunscreen**

When X begins to change his way of thinking he reaches over to put on some sunscreen. The name of the sunscreen is 'hope'. This symbolically seems to represent that X has both found 'hope' and is optimistic that 'hope' will shield him from anything bad befalling him.



# Settings

## Dubai

This is the main setting for the bulk of the novel. This is where Sandros Batros lives and where X is sent to become the Family Manager. Ostensibly the family aren't sure that Sandros is managing the family fortune appropriately and so have brought X in to oversee things. Dubai is always being built and X notes that at any given time there are a dozen high rises being built. It is a city of haves and have nots, where the have nots are so despondent and down trodden that they commit suicide regularly.

## The Situation

This is the name of the apartment complex where both Ted Wilson and the narrator live in Dubai.

## Manhattan

This is where X and Jenn lived when they were together. It is also where they both worked for a Wall Street Law firm.

## The Ocean

The Ocean around Dubai is where X finds the most peace. When he is diving in the ocean he is surrounded by a new world that is not motivated by anything more than survival. There is no drama or intrigue and it is the one place where he almost always can obtain a small measure of peace.

## The Office

The office where X works in one of the second most used settings in the novel. The entire office building is devoted to various facets of the Batros Family fortune. As a result, X finds himself a high priced babysitter, for both Sandros and Alain.



# Themes and Motifs

## Alienation

The theme of Alienation occurs in many places and ways throughout the novel. One of the first instances of this is shortly after he and his girlfriend separate. Since they both work for the same firm the gossip is incessant. X reports that his girlfriend got her story out before he could say anything to anyone, and when he came back to work it was obvious that they would not hear his side of it at all. He reports that most of the men give him sympathetic looks, or hide from him all together, as if he has something contagious, while the women openly give him hostile looks and laugh in his general direction.

Later, when he moves to Dubai, he is, once again, alienated in a different way. Here he is an American in the Middle East, where the culture and customs are unfathomable and hard to discern. He finds that his friend, Eddie, moves on a level and within a circle that he is not a part of, nor ever will be, which further serves to separate him from others. Even his servant, Ali, is not someone X can bond with, and so, he finds himself just as cut off in Dubai as he was in New York.

In a tightening spiral X finds himself cut off from the things that give him purpose and pleasure. First there is the man that jumps from the building while X is sitting in his Pasha chair enjoying the beautiful view from his apartment. This renders him unable to enjoy doing this any more for fear he will see yet another suicide. Then, he manages to watch a brand of pornography that affronts even his sensibilities and he's no longer able to watch porn any longer. He gives up visiting his prostitutes because he finds he's gotten to know too much about them and that Mila, the Madam, has been extorting the girls and keeping most of the profits for herself. The last time he's with one of the girls he has to pay her directly which ruins it for him. Then, he's cut off from Ali's help because of Alain's extortion, which spirals into the loss of his job, his frozen accounts, loss of his vehicles, and passport.

## Loss

There is a pervasive feeling of Loss throughout the novel. This theme begins early on in the novel as the reader learns that X has lost his long time girlfriend, his rent controlled apartment in Manhattan, and that all of the friends he thought he had, were really his girlfriend's. He has a loss of purpose, lacks clarity, and is, in effect, lost spiritually and emotionally. When he takes the job in Dubai he believes that it will be a chance to hit the reset button, but that is not the case.

Once in Dubai it is clear that this is the city where the wealthy come to escape. In fact, when he meets a woman named Samantha at a brunch, she surmises that X is one of a thousand expats who were running from something. She asks him what it is that he is



running from and he brushes her aside saying he came for the job. She doesn't believe him, and later on, X realizes that she was right, that he was really running from himself. Somehow, by living by default, he'd relegated more and more of who he was to Jenn and the vision she had for their lives. He had become 'the dog' in her carefully created scenario.

Now, in Dubai, 'the land of the lost,' as Ollie says, X doesn't believe that there is anyway to 'find' himself. Of course, ironically, it is his 'loss' at the end of the novel that allows him to find his purpose and to obtain the clarity he had desired. His largest problem has been much of the moral and social depravity that he'd witnessed and taken part in, and it is when he gives up these things, decides to buck the system and fight against the corrupt machine that typified the Dubai elite, that he is no longer lost.

Also, in the category is the 'b story' of Ted Wilson. Much like Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, Ted Wilson is one who had embraced Dubai and had 'gone native'. Whether he has died while diving, or is living in quiet reflection on some island with a new mistress, it is clear that everyone that knew of him admired him for his love of life, his quiet assumption of self, and to live life on his own terms. When he is physically gone, the loss of what he represented haunts everyone.

## Nationality

The theme of Nationality is indicated throughout the novel, but most notably in X's interaction with Brett. Brett was an American acquaintance of X's. X learns of Brett's situation when Brett reaches out to him to ask for a loan. This is when the leader, and X, learns that if an expat loses their job in Dubai that all of their bank accounts are frozen. Without any funds he asks X for a loan until he can get back on his feet. X says that he readily loans the money to Brett, not because he likes him, but because he is a fellow American, as if living in a foreign country sharpened and honed his sensibilities for his own countrymen.

This also occurs in X's interaction with Mrs. Ted Wilson number two. She is originally from Chicago and when Ted goes missing she reaches out to X, a fellow American. There is a type of comradeship, X notes, among people who may otherwise never have cared to even share the same aisle in a plane commute. However, he finds Mrs. Ted tedious and petty and even though she is a fellow American, he feels that she should have shown more 'depth' of character...which is ironic as this is some of the same sentiment that is thrown his way.

Ollie, who is Australian, manages to play the archetypal role of the wise adviser. His observations about Americans, X's perspectives, and X's assumptions, about people in general is what holds him back. On a larger stage, the author seems to be making a statement about the U.S. and its world views of people who are not American...as if everyone should look, act, and behave like Americans.



## Morality

Morality is exemplified and chronicled throughout the novel. X's own views toward his fellow man is morally bankrupt as, even in Manhattan, it is obvious that people fall into one of two categories for him: people who can, and cannot, do something for him. He uses people and is conversely upset when he is used. When he moves to Dubai he realizes that an American definition of morality won't apply there. In fact, there seems to be a sliding scale depending on one's bank account. Ali, X's assistant, is shown to be extremely moral and forthright, but he is also very poor.

Conversely, one of the wealthiest people in the novel is Georges Batros. Georges is the Batros family patriarch and has no qualms or questions when it comes to having whatever it is he wants. This is made very clear when X visits him on his yacht and has to watch him take an impromptu shower on the deck while Georges's attendant, a woman, sponges him down. Then, later on the same day, X watches in disgust as Georges's crew members run down and slaughter a goat onshore. They are covered in blood and Georges cheers. X wonders about the owner of the goat and if he was even compensated or notified of the goat's demise. He doubts it.

This, Ted's bigotry, and his experiences with the prostitutes begin to shift X's perspective on what morality is and how one determines one's limits. To that end, then, he determines that morality is a sense of right and wrong, not based on geography, but on one's interior landscape.

## Corruption and Injustice

Almost from the moment that X lands in Dubai he is confronted with gross injustice and corruption at the highest levels. Other expats tell X that the government is corrupt and often looks the other way for the wealthy elite in Dubai. X also learns that it cuts the other way if one happens to be poor and trying to live and work in Dubai. Ali, his assistant, tells X that things are so oppressed and hard for those who are poor in Dubai that the suicide rate among workers is extremely high. X is appalled by this and tries to think what he can do to try and change this in Dubai. He quickly determines that there is nothing he can do about it, and decides to send money to the NGO whose purpose it is to help the downtrodden blue collar workers in Dubai. He believes that this will ease his conscience, but later on, it comes back to haunt him.

At the end of the novel it becomes clear that over a series of months Sandros Batros, who resented having X assigned to him in the first place, has set X up to take a very hard fall. Knowing that it was illegal for young people to be privately tutored, Sandros insists on X taking Alain on as an intern for a few months. He also demands that his son be weighed each day at lunch time. Alain starts to demand money from Ali (showing that the corruption is generational) and Ali is unjustly accused and fired. Later, X is also unjustly accused and faces prison time.





X's decision to return to Dubai and allow himself to be arrested is a direct result of his experience of injustice and corruption. He believes that, like others that are also imprisoned, he can bring attention to the widespread injustices that are occurring in Dubai by being arrested. He is at peace with his decision and feels, for the first time in his life that he is doing something of worth, something that will define him in a way that nothing ever has.

# Styles

## Point of View

The narrative is written from one distinct point of view: X's point of view. This point of view emerges and chronicles X's time in Manhattan during the time he shared with his girlfriend, and over the course of four years while he is living and working in Dubai. This is a very effective choice for the novel, which is narcissistic in nature. This is clear when the reader shares X's thoughts on couple-dom, his relationship with Jenn, his feelings of indifference for most people, and his casual observations (almost clinical in their emotionless state).

At different times the author intrudes, using X's point of view, to direct a message to the reader about any one of the themes. The shifting between present experiences and tenses to past experiences and memories offer the reader a fuller picture of who X is, who he would like to be, and why he continually falls short.

When X thinks to himself that 'f-ing with the world means that eventually the world f-s with you' is a very telling sentiment, and it foreshadows that he will eventually reap the lack of true human contact that he's had, as well as his own use and abuse of others will come back to hound him. Especially telling are the emails that he writes in his head, but never actually types out and sends. Through these glimpses the reader begins to understand and see, better than X, that this family is going to turn on him eventually, as they do everyone in their employ.

## Language and Meaning

There are a few points to note when considering the language and meaning in *The Dog*. First, there is the transition from American views and language to the use of language in Dubai. Words, gestures, and actions all mean something differently in Dubai than they do in the U.S. X learns this quickly when he goes to an ice cream parlor with Lynn, Ollie's wife. He is also reminded of this when he goes up to a singer in a bar and compliments her singing.

The vocabulary is sophisticated, and will most likely, challenge young adults attempting to read this book. More appropriate for college and adult readers, this book tackles very adult and esoteric themes and situations which would not be accessible to a younger demographic. Words and practices that would be foreign to those living outside of Dubai are exemplified in the character of Ali, a bidoon.

This book is also written in a stream of consciousness style, which often uses higher value verbs strung together in many run on sentences, in a conversational tone. The author uses this style and the language to infer that this story is being relayed to the reader in an intimate confessional type of setting.

## Structure

The novel, *The Dog*, is written in a fairly linear fashion, but utilizes a 'stream of consciousness' style that often ping pongs from one topic to the other before finishing up on an earlier topic. Often topics are never finished, such as the disappearance of Ted Wilson. The reader anticipates that answers will be forthcoming about this man's demise, but it is never cleared up.

There are numerous flashbacks, memory acts, and fantasies that are included throughout the novel, and in a large sense this novel takes place inside X's mind, more than in the actual real world. It is through the exploration of his feelings and thoughts and beliefs about people and their actions that X presents the story of his incarceration.



## Quotes

I know of no more honest man than you. There was no reasonable basis for this statement, but I was moved by it— for a moment I wept a little, in fact. I wrote back expressing my interest.

-- X (Chapter 1 paragraph Page 7)

**Importance:** This quote indicates that, for all of his foibles, X is truly an honest man. This makes what happens to him at the end of the book so unacceptable.

Apparently the torch of knowledge, conserved through the ages by monks and scholars and brought to brilliance by the noblest spirits of modernity, now was in the hands of an irresistible horde of arsonists.

-- X (Chapter 2 paragraph Page 13)

**Importance:** This was X's thought about reaching out to his fellow man via the internet. He had placed his particular situation with Jenn and the office online and received such a plethora of nothingness that he considered the entire experiment a waste of time.

MORE THAN EVER, I am in the habit of formulating e-mails that have no counterpart in fact.

-- X (Chapter 3 paragraph Page 15)

**Importance:** This shows how frustrated X is with his new situation in Dubai. He often constructs emails in his head that he does not send.

Let me turn the proposition around: only a lunatic would fail to distinguish between himself and his representative self. This banal distinction may be most obvious in the workplace, where invariably one must avail oneself of an even-tempered, abnormally industrious dummy stand-in who, precisely because it is a dummy, makes life easier for all the others, who are themselves present, which is to say, represented, by dummies of their own.

-- X (Chapter 4 paragraph Page 16)

**Importance:** X is suggesting that everyone has a double life that they lead, that the face they present to the real world and the face that they truly have never match.

By now her misconception about the quality of my association with Ted Wilson was beginning to trouble me.

-- X (Chapter 6 paragraph Page 46)

**Importance:** X states that no matter how much he tries to tell people that he didn't even know Ted Wilson, but had only heard about him, no one listens to him.

Children are natural snitches and squealers and accusers. This is because adults are natural policers, prosecutors, fact finders, judgers, punishers, torturers, hangers,



electrocuters, gravediggers, and defamers of the dead.  
-- X (Chapter 8 paragraph Page 63)

**Importance:** This is X's observation when he sees Alain cheating with the Sudoku puzzle book and wonders about how hard a line he can take with the boss's son.

:This is what happens when you fuck with people for a long time. They fuck with you back.  
-- X (Chapter 10 paragraph Page 76)

**Importance:** This is X's conclusion as he begins to notice that many of the people who formerly supported him are now distancing themselves from him.

I wasn't going to fall into the trap of equating beautiful surroundings with a beautiful state of affairs.  
-- X (Chapter 12 paragraph Page 93)

**Importance:** When X visits Georges Batros, Eddie's father, he realizes that 'all that glitters is not gold' and begins to understand that all of the beautiful things that surround many of the wealthy hide a deeper ugliness and lethality.

Wilson was making a hiding place out of conspicuousness.  
-- X (Chapter 16 paragraph Page 123)

**Importance:** X realizes that all of the social media postings that Ted did actually served to cloak him in a veneer of seeming wholesomeness. That he led a double life and had two families was not suggestable based on the glowing social media presentation.

I guessed that this Mrs. Ted Wilson was in that state of perceptual impairment that I personally know to be a symptom of vital confusion and distress.  
-- X (Chapter 19 paragraph Page 159)

**Importance:** This happens shortly after they've all learned that Ted has disappeared and had been married to two different women. Mrs. Ted Wilson number two meets with Ollie and X to discuss what she should do, but X doesn't have the stomach for it and leaves Ollie to deal with it.

I døn't think sø," I hear him say.  
-- Alain (Chapter 22 paragraph Page 191)

**Importance:** This clearly shows that Alain knows how things are in regards to his status compared to X's. Also, the 'o' crossed out ONLY occurs when Alain is speaking, indicating that the boy is connected to a feeling of 'zero' or 'loss' or an ending of sorts.

A little while later, we part company. The world goes on. It doesn't care — unless it has you in its sights.  
-- X (Chapter 26 paragraph Page 230)

**Importance:** Ollie leaves for Shanghai leaving X to deal with the fallout from the Batros Foundation audit.